

Putting the 'Wow' in Writing

Inspiring young children to become writers

A community of practice approach to developing 'writing in the early years' involving Leicestershire Schools, Leicestershire Local Authority, LEEP and the University of Northampton.

The Aims of the Project:

For children to become part of a 'community of writers', where learning to write is seen as a continuous process linked by the underlying belief that all children will become writers.

Also for all involved in the project to form a '**community of practice**'. A community where we become the 'experts', sharing good practice with others.

This document is just one way we would like to share our ideas and experiences.

Our aims were that we wanted writing for young children to be.....

A choice

Desirable

Irresistible

Inevitable

Motivating

Exciting

Purposeful

Meaningful

Engaging

Fun

After 6 months teachers reported that ...

They felt excited about the writing opportunities which they were providing for the children

The children were responding with enthusiasm and confidence

They had developed a better partnership with parents and families and were finding ways to further inform and involve them in supporting children's writing development

Environments had changed and the continuous and enhanced provision was providing greater opportunities for purposeful writing

The outdoors was used more and this had a positive impact on the children

The adults were taking advantage of 'in the moment writing'

Inspirational starting points were being developed with exciting results

Greater involvement of the wider school and colleagues in celebrating young children's writing achievements

The children's progress in writing was clearly evident and this had a knock on effect in other areas of learning

Data showed clear progress

Information technology was now being used to support writing opportunities and participants were keen to learn more

Completing audits ensured that 'writing' continued to remain a 'top priority'

Children were engaged in more large physical opportunities

Language, communication and interaction was viewed as paramount to enhancing writing opportunities

Story became a key vehicle to children wanting to write and seeing themselves as authors

**Experiential Learning formed the basis of children
'wanting' to write and having something to write about!**

The following are short case studies from each of the participating schools. Some are new and exciting ideas, whilst others are a twist on existing practice. If you are intrigued or inspired by a particular scenario then please contact the relevant school and teacher to find out more.

Sharing our work and giving it purpose: Blogging and Books

We have an online blog which we update regularly with photos to show what we have done during the week, accompanied by a piece of text. At the beginning of the year an adult models this process and this is then built on by writing with the children and eventually allowing them to do this independently. They also learn how to "download" photos from the camera and "upload" them to the web. For some of our reluctant writers, the opportunity to use a keyboard, instead of using a pencil not only motivated them to write, but provided us with a useful assessment tool to monitor their progression in phonics as it showed us just how capable they were!

We found this really helped parents get over the frustration of the common answers "nothing" and "I dunno" when they asked their child what they had done that day! Parents are able to interact by writing back in the comments, which the children really enjoying reading, giving them a real sense of purpose in their writing.

This year we have found that the more inspirational, hands-on experiences that have fostered children's imagination have produced better quality writing, which children are keen to do!

In the Grantham Journal with Steve Antony, and a few pages from our book!



Children enjoy listening, telling and reading stories and there are plenty of competitions to encourage children to write their own stories. At Harby we entered the Reading Zones Young Writers competition for two years in a row. We worked together as a class to create one story by going round at circle time, each adding a sentence on as to "what happened next". The children were so excited about being able to write and decorate their own story, that they also made up their own stories in their own time, learning how to use the stapler to make their own books! The first year, we won the competition and had our books printed for us as part of the prize. The second year we weren't so lucky, but decided to print them ourselves so each child could have a copy. We found an online company and managed to print them for roughly £6 a copy!! The children we so proud of what they had achieved, and often asked us to read it to them at storytime! As a result of winning the first year we also got a visit from Steve Antony -- author/illustrator of several books!

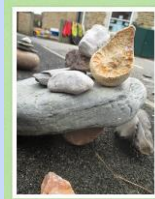
Some of the writing opportunities shared on the blog



"Jac fro's trapd the penguin in d ls. It was cld. It melda in ml hand. Wee rowt ower naims in it too."



"Luk at my rock statyoo, wee balunsd dem on eech uver"



"Wee maid mud from compoast. It was fun. Wee got mesee! Doant bee kros!"



This developed naturally as an interest from the children. We came back from a session where we had been making “potions”, and the children suggested that maybe these potions could be used by our fairy friends and Puff from Honalee (from a previous topic of Puff the Magic Dragon) and several children proceeded to write to them detailing the ingredients of their potions and how to make them. This was encouraged, and now, after most sessions the children are keen to write to the fairies (who obviously write back!) about how their session has gone and how it could help the fairies.



onec
I made a man
called mr slky man
he werse a hat.
I like him he is
funny.



dog
Imist
you
I wud
LIC
ot
PLia
winyow
love
Penny

I made a den
It had blankets
In it It was a tent
It was wosid
in the bottom
PLughwewnt.
We had enen
cathors was
Safnr wool



Floues
are pretty
bushes are
prickly
trees have
blossoms.

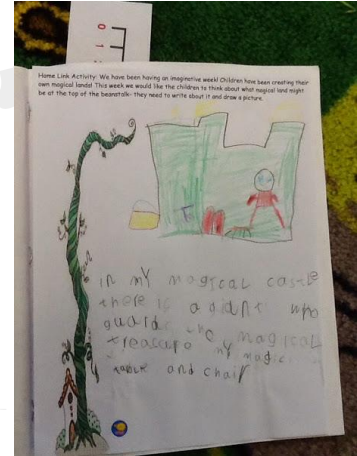
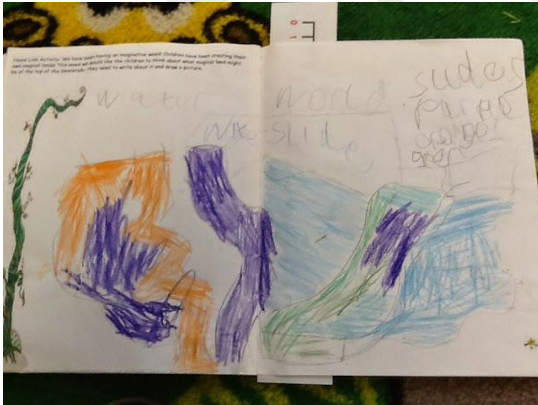


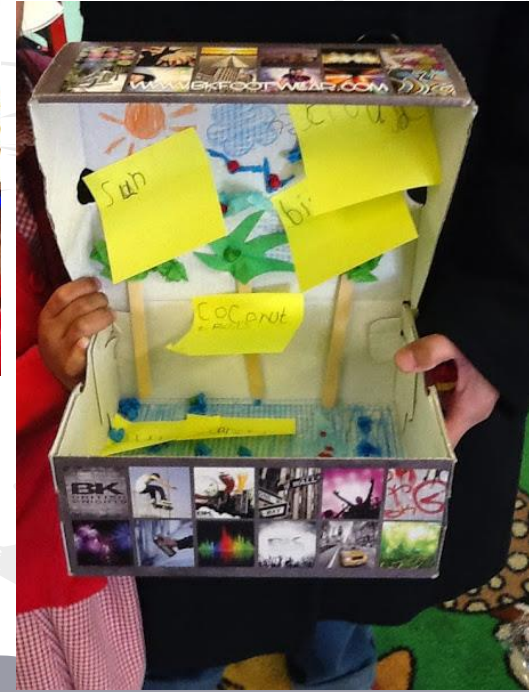
Using Forest School as an inspirational starting point



'Parents Imagination Morning' at Thorpe Acre Infants

The children had been learning all about Jack and the Beanstalk! On the Monday the children made their own magic beans and talked about what might happen if they grew! The next morning the parents were invited in for an imagination morning (we didn't mention writing- as some parents are put off by this!) the children spent the morning creating their own magical lands- of what might be at the top of their beanstalk! They then labelled their lands and wrote about what it is like there! For the children whose parents didn't come- they still made their own magical lands and then we sent pictures home for the children to share and write about with their family at home





Here is what some of the children and parents found at the top of the beanstalk

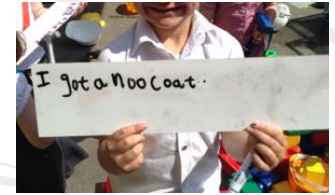
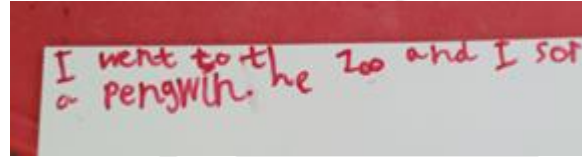
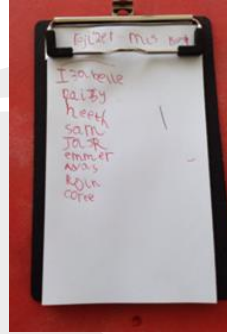
Developing Outdoor Writing at Fernvale



At the start of the LEEP project we undertook an audit of our provision and it showed we needed to develop our writing provision in our outdoor area. We wanted to develop an area that did not need taking in during poor weather or bringing in at the end of each day. We sourced a small writing cupboard and resourced it with a range of items that would allow the children to choose exciting writing resources and prompts. We also add to the resources to match children's developing interests.



Developing Outdoor Writing at Fernvale



The children loved the new resources and the photos are some examples of children using the resources and their independent child initiated writing.



Bog Baby Visits Churchill Infants: Using Books as an Inspirational Starting Point

As a school, amongst other inspirational starting points, we wanted to experiment with how we use books as our starting point. We did this because basing our topic on books is something we do very frequently, so we wanted to explore doing it a little differently, and hopefully inspiring children to do more INDEPENDENT writing around the topic. Often we get very high quality focus/guided writing from the children, but we don't always get them enthused and inspired to go off in their own directions with their writing independently.

After one of the LEEP sessions that introduced some lovely new stories to us, and discussion with my group, I based one topic around The Bog Baby.

We read the story during one circle time to the children (we didn't introduce it as a 'Topic' on a Monday as we usually would), and wondered aloud and discussed with the children if they thought anything similar might live in our outdoor area. The children were very lively in their discussion of what they thought might exist in our grounds. We then didn't mention anything for the rest of the day. The following morning we told the children that we had found some interesting things in our outdoor area...



The children instantly picked up on the idea that it might be our very own Bog Baby! We discussed what the bog baby had left behind, and why we might not be able to see him. The activities that stemmed from this were then mostly, and very importantly, CHILD INITIATED and INDEPENDENT. The children made models of what they thought our bog baby would look like based on what we had found, and wrote about him, describing him. They wrote letters to the Bog Baby because they decided he was shy, and left them around the area to encourage him to come out and visit them. They made lists of things they thought the Bog Baby might need.....



...and left him some modes of transportation and food (they were very chuffed the next day to see that the motorbike had been used and the apple eaten!).

It was successful because it was inspirational, and it got the children choosing to write independently. It had impact because some of our more reluctant writers chose to write (particularly because we based so much of it outdoors, again gaining inspiration from one of the LEEP sessions), and we therefore had solid evidence that they were making good progress in writing. It was also successful because it was something we could *do all the time*. We of course need to be mindful of exciting opportunities such as visitors and trips, but it was exciting to create something that we could do on a very regular basis to inspire our writers to WRITE!

A Special Mission for the Children at Oxley Primary School: Using imagination to inspire writing



Oxley Primary School had a special mission sent by Oxley Man!!! The class received a letter along with a block of ice and a locked box. The letter explained that Ice man wants Oxley Man's box! The children explored the ice and discovered a key frozen inside.

The children brainstormed lots of different ideas about how they could get the key out of the block of ice. The children eventually melted the ice using hot water and opened the box to discover a magic ball of power. The children also formulated, drew and labelled plans to trap ice man.

All the children produced a piece of imaginative writing describing the powers the magic ball may have. The children also sent a letter to Oxley Man to ask him about magic ball and invite him to a superhero party. This writing activity inspired many children to create wonderful pieces of writing and encouraged the children's speaking and listening skills. The children have loved hearing back from Oxley Man through the use of an ipad application called Morfo.

The Power of Super Heroes

Using Well Loved Traditional Tales to Inspire Writing: “**Look what the children at Oxley Primary School found at the top of the beanstalk!**”



Story writing

- We used Pie Corbett actions and story plans to help us to remember the story.
- The children loved acting! We all pulled ourselves along a sari to pretend we were climbing the beanstalk.

When we arrived at the top of the beanstalk we went through a cloud and wrote about our experiences on a cloud template. Some children saw Elsa and others found the giant!

- We made magic beans from tissue paper and wrote about it's powers!

Rhyming words

- We wrote rhyming words on leaves and stuck them onto our beanstalk.

Labels, captions, sentences

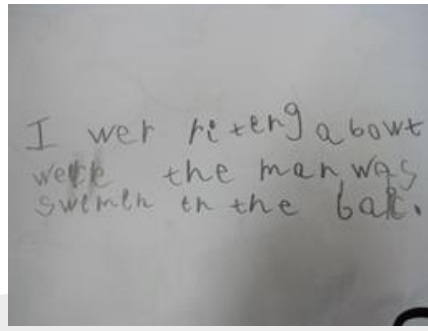
- At the writing table the children had leaves and clouds to write words, captions and sentences.
- The children have had fun drawing and labelling their own story plans and maps to help Jack find the giant.



Using Children's Work in the Wider Community: Inspiration from Sacred Heart Academy, Loughborough as they work with an artist on a sixty metre piece of art!!!

Janet Curry a member of the local community came in to the Reception Class to talk about her work on the Devonshire Square Art Project. She facilitated this project in conjunction with a Bristol artist Wei Ong. The sixty metre artwork is brimming with images of Loughborough people and places.



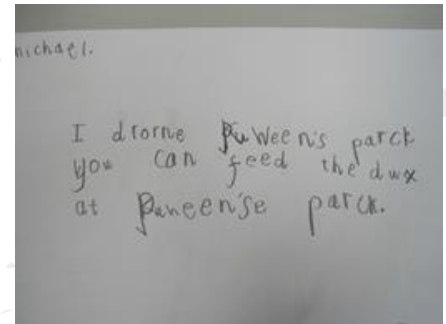


Janet showed a power point to the children and explained how it is divided into the seasons. She encouraged the children to become artists.

The children then drew a picture of their favourite part of Loughborough including steam trains, ladybird books, Queens Park, Loughborough fair and Beacon Hill.

The children then wrote a sentence about their drawings. These are going to be used at a later date as part of a school project celebrating our local area. The reception class are going to paint a large frieze which will be laminated and used as a writing focus in our play ground.

This wonderful art work is now a legacy for these children, their families and the community of Loughborough.

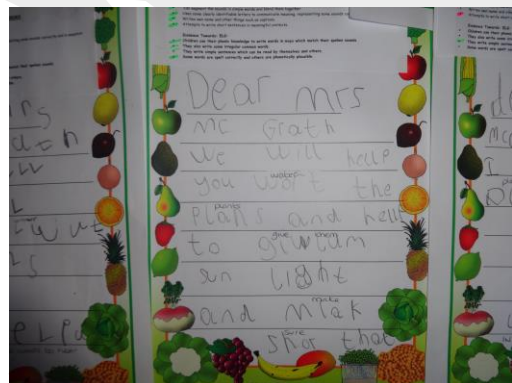
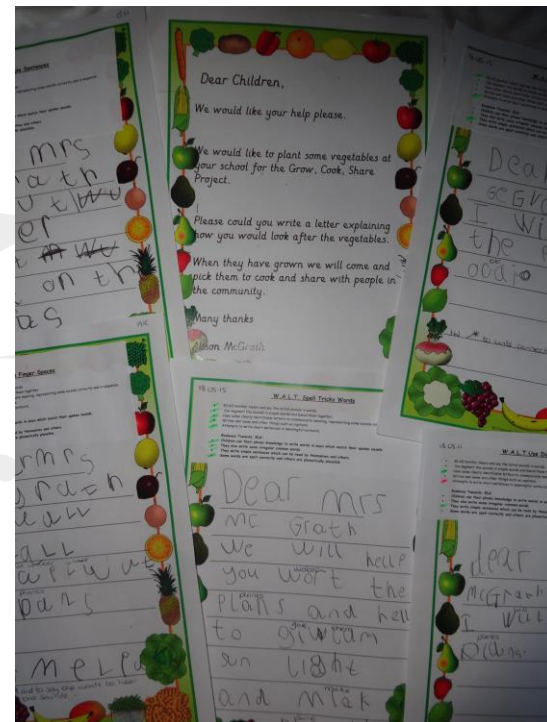


Involving the local community of Thringstone: A Grow, Cook, Share project with lots of writing opportunities along the way

The children at Thringstone have been very interested in planting and growing this half term. They have planted bean and sunflower seeds. The children have helped to dig up the vegetable patch and plant flowers.

They have written signs for the vegetable patch and wrote instructions about how to plant a seed. Castle Donington Volunteer Centre is running a major Grow, Cook, Share project, encouraging the community to get involved in both growing and cooking their own food. The project is linking into the local lunch club as well as the Castle Donington Sure Start Centre. The Grow, Cook, Share project will grow the plants from seed and deliver them to school when they have established.

The school gardening club has helped to tidy the green house and clear the vegetable areas. The children have written letters to the volunteer centre explaining how they will look after the vegetables and are looking forward to them arriving. Over the next few months the children will look after the vegetables and when they are ready to harvest the Grow, Cook, Share project will come and pick them and cook something nutritious for the local community. The children will be involved in the whole process with plenty of writing opportunities along the way, and hopefully get to visit elderly people in care homes to deliver the food they have helped to cook.



Planting seeds and preparing for the vegetables to grow.

The vegetables have been delivered to Thringstone and the children of the gardening club and Foundation class have been busy looking after the vegetables and gardening area.



The children will continue to be involved with the Grow , Cook, Share project as they move into Year 1 by sharing how they have looked after the vegetables and writing ideas of what they could cook with the vegetables to share with the community.

St Mary's in Loughborough found a new, exciting way to involve parents - Writing Teddy's Adventures



This pack was created to involve parents at home to help promote their child's storytelling and writing. It involves five children a week being given a pack. Each contains a different bear for them to take home. A letter is written to the child from the bear asking them to look after it for a week and then write about their adventures together.

What happened to Bear? Follow their amazing adventures



The children were very excited to take these packs home. The response from the first sets of children were amazing. Written work was completed and even photos taken. The booklets were brought back into school to share with the rest of the class. They all wanted to share their books and even keep the bear!

A super new take on an old favourite, which makes this opportunity personalised for each child!

Writing for a reason at New Swannington

Inspiration

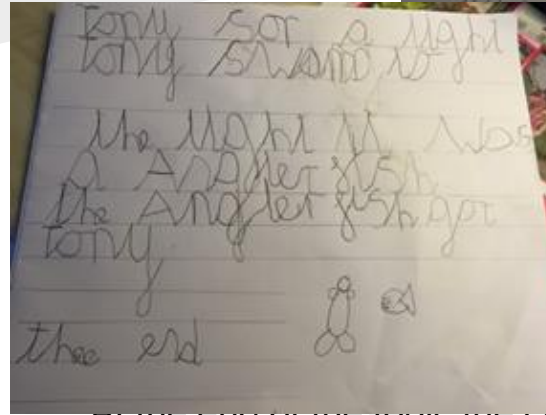
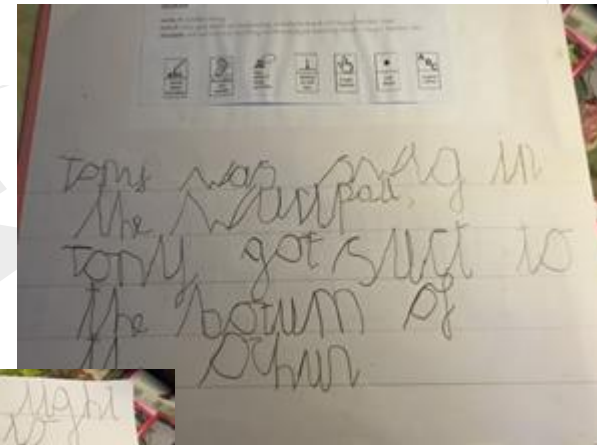
We have been learning a story called 'Tony's Terrible Tale.' The children were devastated to find out one day that Tony the Turtle had gone missing. They came into school one day to find police tape all over the doors, police notices up outside for their parents to read to them before they came into school and when they came into the classroom they saw it was completely trashed. Slime on the floor, chairs thrown over, toys and draws pulled out, painting split over and secret messages written in code for us to decode. The children had to become police detectives with their parents and note down all the evidence for the police.



Crime Scene

Other writing that came from it...

- We made urgent posters and delivered them to each class whilst we explained what had happened.
- We took our posters to the sea life centre to inform them we think it was an anglerfish.
- We wrote letters to our parents to tell them about our camping day, ready to catch the anglerfish in the traps we had made.
- We have been writing news reports as the TV crew want to hear about what has happened.



At the end of the topic the children wanted to write Tony's Terrible Tale as their own story. It's the most writing of the best quality we have ever seen them do!

How to Grow a Dinosaur at St Botolphs, Shepshed

Inviting parents into school to promote children's writing opportunities



How to Grow a Dinosaur at St Botolphs, Shepshed

The parents and children were invited into school to see what we had growing in our outdoor area. We had set up different stations around the outdoor area were to inspire some ideas for those who might need inspiration or to use as small world role play. They then wrote about what they had grown or what they had seen in their land.

The parents gave some very positive feedback - so much so, we're doing another morning in June! □

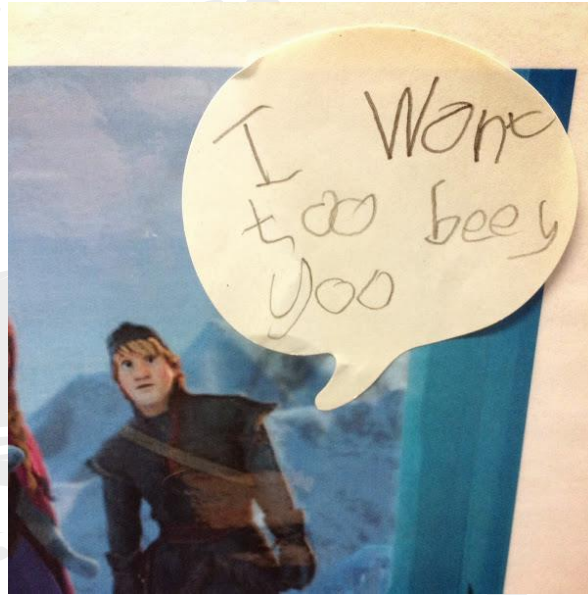


***Open to mums, dads, grannies,
grandpas, childminders etc***

Children as screenwriters and filmmakers



A writing idea magpied from the Ace Early Years blog. They blogged about putting up a comic strip for their children to add speech bubbles to. I followed my children's interests and their favourite films are Frozen and the Lego Movie so I printed off scenes from these films. They then added speech bubbles and their mini me pictures so they were in the film as well. This was a really popular activity. and was extended by the children writing captions and adding in their own scenes. Following our IT session we then used iMovie to make films.



Children were all keen to write their own plays and to become one of their favourite characters. Using film is a good way to share children's writing with a wider audience

Bringing home and school together to showcase children's work at Measham

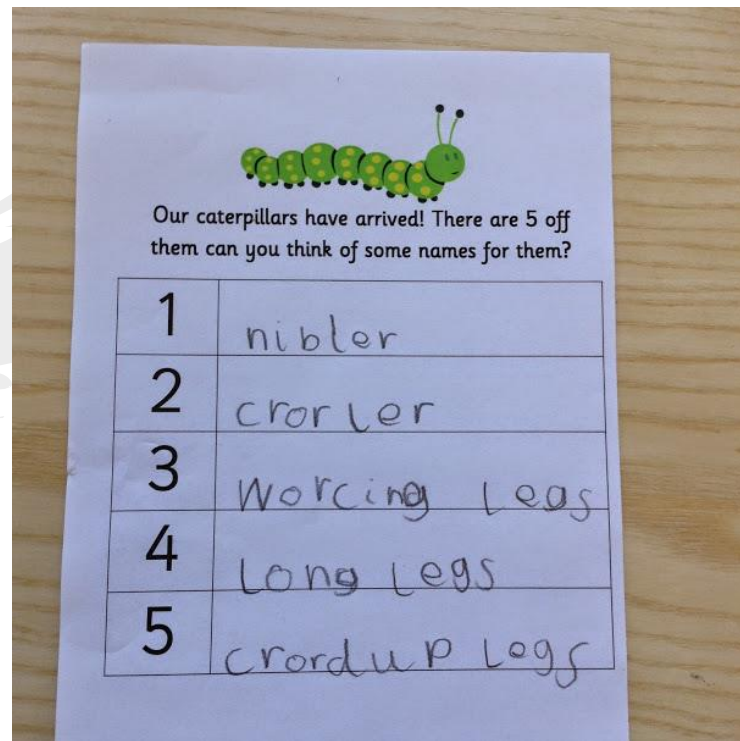
Thought I would share a selection of some of the wonderful 'Work at home' created by the children in my class alongside their parents/carers/siblings. This is a half termly whole school event during which we offer a selection of practical activities to choose from, all linked to our current topic. We have focused on 'The Natural World' and activity ideas included; making a collage picture using natural resources, going for a sensory walk, looking for a non-fiction book and going on a minibeast hunt. We have displayed some of the work and will be sharing further examples on Friday afternoon during our homework showcase, when parents/carers join us for a big show and tell session!



A fun 'Mega Job' with a purpose at Fernvale.



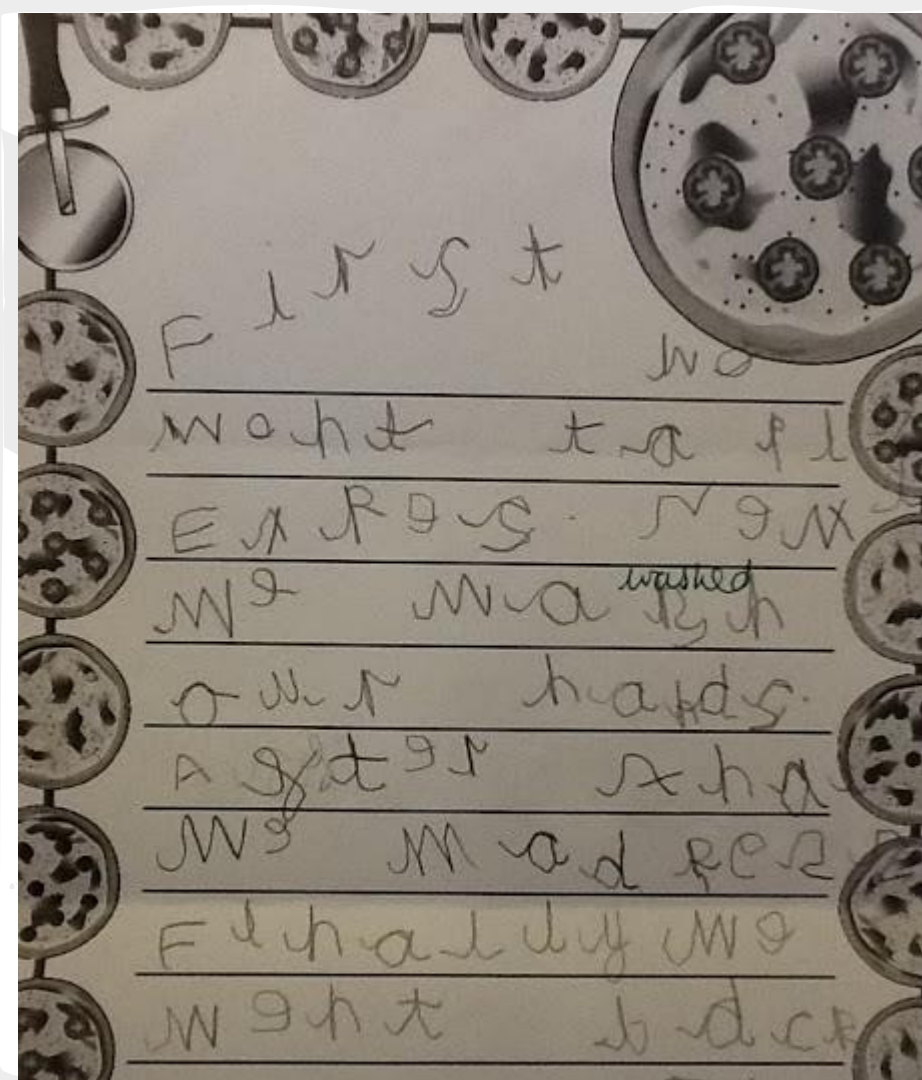
I was inspired by Alexandra's pet naming writing, so when our new caterpillars arrived I asked the children to think of names for them. We had lots of giggles on the carpet thinking of names. I put the caterpillars on a table with name sheets and magnifying glasses. I also made this the 'Mega Job' which means all the children have to visit the table, do the task and add their brick to the tower. They didn't need much encouragement as they were keen to see the caterpillars.



An excellent example of extending our writing community

A Yummy Experience to inspire writing as Parkland School visit Pizza Express





We went on a trip to Pizza Express to engage the children in our new topic all about food. Providing rich experiential learning the trip inspired the children to do some super writing!

Large scale writing opportunities at Greystoke, Narborough

- We did some map work as part of our 'On the Ground' topic.

- It started off as a group activity.

- It was exciting and inspirational because children really engaged in the activity and wanted to create their own.

- They all added lots of different landmarks.

- They used their phonic knowledge to write labels for each landmark.

- Children enjoyed creating maps on a large scale both at the table and on the floor.

- The impact was huge as children wanted to create maps of different places all



Also at Greystokes a visit from an air hostess as part of our 'Air' topic was used as a 'hook' for writing



Children experienced what it would be like to travel on an aeroplane through role-play.

- The classroom was set up as a check in desk and an aeroplane.
- Children took on different roles – pilot, co pilot, cabin crew and passengers.

Children designed and made their own passports.

- Children went through check in with passports they had created and printed out boarding passes.
 - Children were shown to their seats by the cabin crew and then shown the safety procedures before takeoff.
 - Sound effects were used to create the effect of the plane taking off then landing.
 - Cabin crew served food through the flight and the pilots relayed messages to their passengers.
 - All the children enjoyed the experience and learnt about different elements of flying on an aeroplane.
- They all enthusiastically wrote about their experience.

At Cobden they now start the day in a new way

At Cobden we start every morning with dance write this is followed by an activity using crayons, paint, chalk, shaving foam, ribbons, streamers and baby lotion. the children love it and ensures we are ready for writing our letters and sounds



What super ways to support those gross motor and fine motor skills needed to be able to manipulate a writing tool



Using the Outdoors to Inspire writing at St. Botolph's!



We like to use books to inspire the children and with ideas from LEEP writing course combined the outdoors, sooo...

We used Handa's Surprise and got the children to think about the children in the village not wearing shoes and how it must feel to walk around bare feet.

We placed lots of different things in the garden for them to put their feet into, as well as just running around on the grass!

We had lots of lovely writing on footprint paper of describing words!

It even made a lovely display for the parents to come in and have a look at!





Children from Newlands visit the Farm.

An off-site visit to inspire writing opportunities.

A trip to the farm provided a great inspiration for writing.

The next day we spent much time discussion the previous day and things the children remembered. The children were then introduced to a rotation of activities - controversial I know.

The writing is self explanatory, given the comments written by staff. However, the riddle was the result of sharing, and answering, riddles as a whole class and then being given the challenge to write a riddle of their own, about one of the animals seen at the farm.

We were very pleased with all of the work the children produced.

19.3.15

Our Farm Trip



I use the bus
to go to the farm.

bus
go to the farm
to see the animals.

I love feeding
animals, the
cows, goats, sheep
rabbits, horses.
Joshua

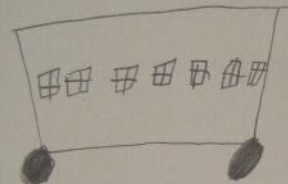
Literacy: Writing
• Sometimes gives meaning to marks as they draw and paint (20-30 months)
• Uses some clearly identifiable letters to communicate meaning
• Representing some sounds correctly, and in sequence (40-50 months)
• Attempts to write short sentences to meaningful contexts (45-60 months)

I have the legs.
I give milk.
I eat grass.
What am I?

Elise

What am I? middle of farm animal.
17.3.15. indp.

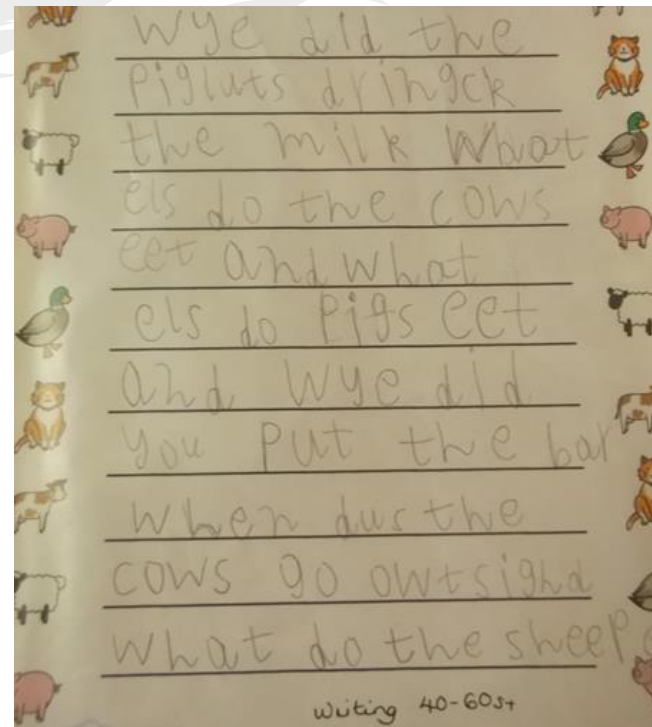
Our Farm Trip 19.3.15



I sit in the
on the bus.
and I was
exhausted. And
I sat in
the van having
lunch.
I sat in the
pistachios.
Lola-Ava

At Launde Primary we also wrote about our farm trip

Our trip to the farm at Easter time created a lot of great writing opportunities, both before and after the trip. In preparation, with more able pupils we introduced question marks as we wrote down things that we would like to ask the farmers. The trip itself was exciting for staff and children, the resulting work reflected this. Some children were able to write thank you letters and recounts, less able children could create some good pictures and label them.



Using Popular Media at Launde's: Frozen topic

Our Frozen topic was particularly successful this year. The story was a great starting point as there were relatable characters for both girls and boys. We started with character descriptions but the children were so engaged they initiated story writing themselves. The children particularly enjoyed creating Sven on the computer and could type about their favourite characters.

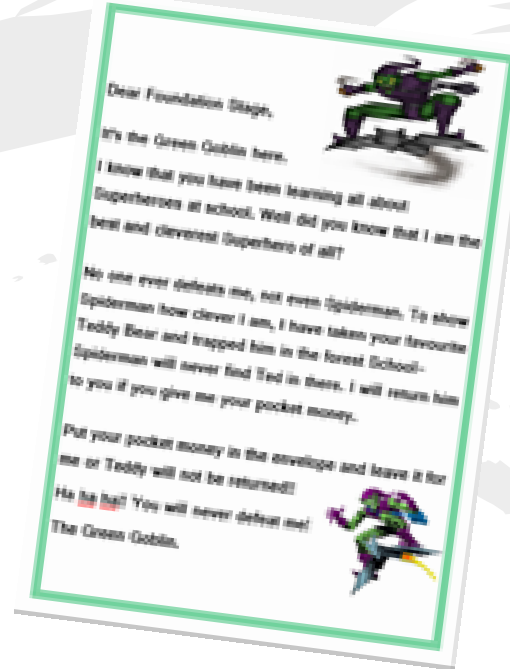




Belvoirdale's got Superheroes!



One Monday morning the children came in and we found that Spiderman had visited our classroom and left a web in our classroom!



In the web was a message from Green Goblin telling us he had captured our teddy and hidden him in our Forest School!





Belvoirdale's got Superheroes!



We decided that we needed to write Spiderman some directions to rescue Teddy from the Forest, which we attached to the web for him to collect - which happened mysteriously each night after we'd all gone home! He even wrote us some messages on our board which we enjoyed writing replies to.

The children also decided that we should make traps for Green Goblin in the Forest, which they then wrote about.

We also had lots of fun writing letters to the Lego Marvel superheroes asking to join their team and describing our own superhero identities, as well as writing some superhero stories!



Market Harborough C of E Academy engaging boys

Use of ROLE PLAY to encourage writing:

We converted our playhouse and surrounding area into a building site complete with bricks and different tools. The children wrote about what they needed to do. A clip board made all the difference!! A very important job!



'Superheroes become authors' at Market Harborough C of E Academy

Children were offered the opportunity to make up their own adventures. They decided on the characters and the plot and then acted out their stories.

Keen to share their exciting adventures they became authors, writing their own stories. Superheros **and** authors, what exciting lives they lead.



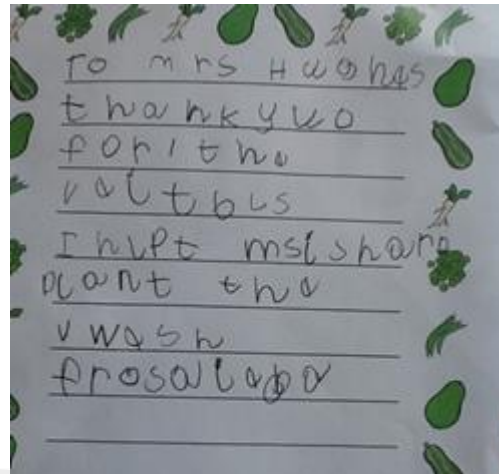
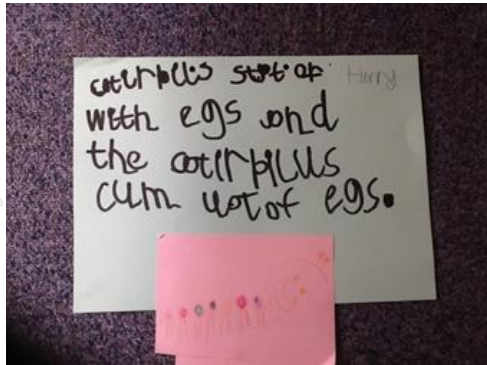
Boothwood and their 'Funky Fingers'

We plan daily Funky Fingers sessions during which the whole class take part in a variety of activities, set to music. Sessions last for around 10 minutes each and are carried out in small groups with an adult modelling and leading the experience. These sessions are lively, fun and differentiated to support individual need. Thus the children participate in tasks which are designed to strengthen and develop their fine motor skills in preparation for writing.



'In the moment writing' at Boothwood

In the moment "writing" is writing that is not planned for. In our setting we aim to maximise opportunities for independent writing both indoors and out. We use the children's spoken ideas, interests and individual requests, which arise during our daily continuous provision. For example; a parent donated plants for our garden, the children wanted to say thank you and also to write labels so we all knew what we were growing. We watched caterpillars grow and change as part of our display and one child wanted to explain what he had seen to others.



This book is written by the participating schools involved in the project **‘Putting the Wow in Writing’**

Grateful thanks also go to the families, colleagues and friends who have also participated in this project.

But of course we could not have created this book without the joyful participation of all the children involved.

We look forward to expanding our community and to watching more children ‘put on their dancing shoes’